

Good day, Senator Osten, Representative Walker, Senator Miner, Representative France and members of the Appropriations Committee.

My Name is Marcie Rivera and I am writing to you because people are dying. This is urgent.

I am a proud long-standing employee of the Southeastern Council on Alcoholism and Drug Dependence (SCADD), currently Director of Detox in New London. SCADD provides a multitude of services to all those seeking recovery from substance dependence/abuse, and has served the community since 1966. Our goal is to help others become substance free and improve their quality of life.

Before COVID, we as an agency were in the midst of fighting an opioid epidemic, and that alone was a heartbreaking reality as many died from opioid overdose. COVID has brought on so many more challenges to the behavior health field. When COVID first started we were forced to battle an unknown virus that was killing people. Obtaining an ample amount of PPE to protect our staff and clients was the first struggle we had, the subsequent struggles included limiting how many people we were able to admit due to social distancing requirements, which completely goes against all we stand for, and regularly working severely short staffed. The staff was mentally and physically drained on many levels, the death of staff members, working longer hours, sicker clients, and the unknown if and when this would end. Unfortunately, COVID has not ended and the staff is still mentally and physically drained.

It has been difficult filling open positions and this is adding to the already drained staff. We have had many open nurse and clinical staff positions at detox for almost 2 years. The need for behavioral health services is at an all time high; substance abuse, mental health, overdose, suicide, and it is detrimental to providers to be properly and fairly funded to meet these needs. Let me be clear people are dying. Help us, help those who need us. Mothers, daughters, fathers, sons, friends, family, neighbors, children, our community! We need to help our community and we cannot do it without the proper resources to do so. Again, let me be clear people are dying. Thank you Marcie Rivera

